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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE,  
OCTOBER 4, 2004

1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Herald" on 10/2, entitled "Debate and reality." "Although the first of three presidential debates was won by the Democratic candidate John F. Kerry, his victory was far from being a decisive blow against President Bush, who also lost the first debate against Al Gore four years ago."

"Even though the focus of the debate was the issue of national security and foreign policy, the discussions were practically concentrated on Iraq. Kerry attacked Bush for his 'colossal misjudgments' that diverted him from a real war against terrorism to invade a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 and didn't have weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, Bush didn't change his position, stressing that the world is now a safer place."

"No matter what the result of the debate was, of Kerry's communication skills, or his inability to get a real advantage against a president who's being haunted by the reality of his failure in Iraq, the truth is that the White House's unilateral focus of imperialistic expansionism won't change regardless of who wins the November election."

2. Editorial in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "La Prensa" on 10/3, entitled "First round." "Less than a month before the election, the first presidential debate between President Bush and Senator Kerry clearly showed that in the two key issues of foreign policy, Iraq and terrorism, the differences aren't significant. They're very close in that regard, it's just a matter of perspective."

"Both candidates presented similar plans to achieve a common goal. The Democratic candidate didn't dare to propose a different position, and he didn't address the real causes of the war in Iraq."

"So far, Kerry's victory in the debate hasn't improved his numbers in the polls. We'll have to wait after the forthcoming debates on the U.S. domestic economy and social policy to find out about the actual outcome of the Miami debate. The end of this contest will be known on November 2."

Pierce